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ABSTRACT

Amendments to the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) require each service delivery area to develop an educational component as part of its Summer Youth Employment Program. The Summer Youth Employment Program enhances the basic educational skills of youth, encourages school completion for enrollment in supplementary or alternative school programs, and provides eligible youth with exposure to the work world. A second amendment requires that a service delivery area assess the reading and mathematics skill levels of eligible participants and expend funds for basic and remedial education. Service delivery areas establish written program goals, including improvement in school retention and completion, academic performance, employability skills, and coordination with community service organizations. Some principles of actions are required to develop a model JTPA summer program: (1) build on already established efforts; (2) start small; (3) take a problem-solving approach; (4) turn programs into year-round endeavors; (4) move toward individual, self-paced instruction; (5) actively seek help; and (6) expect change. (A list of resource people are included.) (NLA)

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Remedial Education and Summer Youth Employment Under the Job Training Partnership Act

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This monograph is drawn from a presentation made before the January 1987 joint meeting of Minnesota's job training and vocational education professionals. It reflects only the views of the author and not necessarily the opinions of the National Commission for Employment Policy.

REMEDIAL EDUCATION AND SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYMENT
UNDER THE JOB TRAINING PARTNERSHIP ACT

Among Members of Congress working on employment and training programs, an overwhelming consensus has emerged regarding the importance of basic skills to people's success in the labor market. This consensus applies to all job training and education programs and has a specific application to the summer jobs program for youth.

Congress recently enacted amendments to the Job Training Partnership Act that require every service delivery area to develop an educational component as part of its Summer Youth Employment Program. Before discussing these amendments, let's briefly review the research basis for the changes.

A high school diploma is worth more than ever before. Gordon Berlin of the Ford Foundation and Andrew Sum from Northeastern University compared young men who had graduated from high school but had no further schooling to young men who had dropped out of high school in terms of their income at different ages. In the period of 1960 to 1964, young men 18 to 24 years old who graduated from high school could expect to make 31 percent more than their dropout counterparts. That difference in earnings was significant for older men, as well. High school graduates 25 to 34 years old made 19 percent more than dropouts, and for 35 to 44 year old graduates, the differential was 16 percent. Let's look at a comparable group of men more recently — in the period 1980 to 1984.

Young men 18 to 24 who had graduated from high school and had no further schooling made 59 percent more than dropouts of the same age during the period of 1980 to 1984. For 25 to 34 year olds, the earnings difference was 35 percent, and for 35 to 44 year olds, the earnings differential was 34 percent. How do you interpret these results? A high school diploma pays off in work and earnings and it pays off more now than it did twenty years ago.

A comparable set of statistics are presented by Berlin and Sum for females. In the period 1969 to 1974, young women 18 to 24 years old with high school diplomas made 64 percent more than dropouts of the same age. For young women in the 1980 to 1984 period, the earnings differential was a substantial 86 percent. Again, the difference in earnings continues as people age. For the period 1980 to 1984, 25 to 34 year old women graduates made 44 percent more than dropouts and 35 to 44 year old women graduates made 31 percent more than dropouts of the same age. The gap in earnings between high school dropouts and graduates continues over time and we expect that gap to continue to grow.

These statistics come from a recent publication by Berlin and Sum that highlights the importance of basic skills deficiencies in a number of seemingly distinct social problems: welfare dependency, teen unemployment, out-of-wedlock parenting, high school dropouts, and the decline of productivity growth among American workers. Their article, "American Standards

of Living, Family Welfare and the Basic Skills Crisis," is based on a presentation Gordon Berlin made in December 1986 at a conference sponsored by the National Governors' Association and the Association of Chief State School Officers.

What is the significance of this set of statistics for operators of the Job Training Partnership Act programs? JTPA aims to increase employment and earnings for participants over time. We know that most jobs skill training programs have a relatively short-term impact on employment and earnings and that the difference between those who take those training programs and those who don't, decays over time. We also know that education pays off and that the payoff lasts. That is the basis for the emerging Congressional consensus that education needs to be a part of every job training effort that aims to make a long-term difference in earnings and job potential.

These legislative amendments specifically address the summer jobs program for economically disadvantaged youth. What does research say about this group? To simplify some fairly complex research, let me say that we know that youngsters learn during the school year and that they either lose ground or learn more slowly during the summer months. Researchers have also discovered that young people who are average or above average in their reading and math achievement don't suffer as much academically during the summer months. Some people even contend that as much as 80 percent of the difference between high achieving and low achieving youngsters can be attributed to learning loss during the summer months. It is this set of findings that created the rationale for the amendments to the Job Training Partnership Act.

Remediation Amendments

Now let's take a look at the amendments themselves and what they actually say. The first amendment in many ways is the most important. It takes the introductory statement of purpose for the Summer Youth Employment Program and restates it in a dramatically new way; the amendment says that:

> "The purpose of the Summer Youth Employment Program is to enhance the basic educational skills of youth, to encourage school completion for enrollment in supplementary or alternative school programs and to provide eligible youth with exposure to the world of work."

The second amendment requires that a service delivery area <u>shall</u> "assess the reading and mathematics skill levels of eligible participants in programs funded by this part" and <u>shall</u> expend funds from this Act or otherwise available money or both "for basic and remedial education" as described in the local plan.

Third, the amendments say that service delivery areas shall establish "written program goals and objectives" to be used in evaluating the summer program's effectiveness. The amendments say that such goals may include:

- o improvement in school retention and completion;
- o improvement in academic performance, including math and reading comprehension;
- o improvement in employability skills;
- o demonstrated coordination with other community service organizations such as local education agencies, law enforcement agencies and drug and alcohol prevention and treatment programs.

We have discussed the research context of these amendments. What about the Congressional intent? The key document in analyzing what Congress intended was issued along with the final version of the amendments and is referred to as the Statement of Managers.

First, it is absolutely clear that Members of Congress want every service delivery area to develop a remediation component as part of its summer jobs program. They did not want to mandate a specific spending level or a specific service level, however, for fear of undercutting existing cooperative arrangements.

The Senate bill would have required that 25 percent of summer program funds be spent for remediation. The Job Training Partnership, Inc., conducted a survey of SDAs prior to final passage of the amendments and the results of their survey were very persuasive. The Partnership discovered that a surprising number of service delivery areas had already begun to conduct remediation efforts during the summer and that many of those programs received non-JTPA funds. Therefore, in discussing their intent in the Statement of Managers, the Members of Congress specifically said that they did not want to supplant other resources. This is the reason for not requiring that a specific percentage of funds be spent on this activity. The Statement of Managers specifically prohibits Governors and the Secretary of Labor from setting spending requirements or service levels. The Statement specifies that only the local service delivery areas should make the decisions.

The second key area addressed by the Statement of Managers has to do with the assessment of math and reading skills. The Managers said that service delivery areas do not need to conduct new tests. Existing data and information may be used. The obvious implication here is for the need to coordinate with school systems to obtain information or referrals.

Finally, the Statement of Managers addresses the issue of written goals and objectives by giving particular explanations of two of the permissible criteria for judging success. The Members of Congress said that improvement in academic performance "does not necessarily mean that students must

show an increase in test scores." This reflects experience. Research shows that poor achievers tend to lose ground academically during the summer months. Thus, a reasonable goal for summer remediation programs would be to reduce the summer loss in achievement. The Congressional managers also chose to explain what they meant by an improvement in employability skills. Specifically they said that this means "that a youth has performed satisfactorily on a job, that he or she has been instilled with work habits, skills, and attitudes sought by employers. While a youth participant earns a wage, the real benefit to the participant is learning real world labor market skills which will be of long term benefit."

Implementation

Now that we've looked at the background for these amendments we come to the heart of this discussion. Realistically, what can you expect from a small short-term remediation effort?

My personal answer is this: I would try to make this program effort one step in a gradual movement of local JTPA programs toward a focus on longer term results, especially by placing more emphasis on education, because we know that education pays off in the workplace. I think that this shift in direction will be supported -- even demanded -- by private industry councils that begin to look beyond their job placement results to issues of job retention, long-term reductions in welfare dependency and long-term increases in work and earnings that make a real difference in the lives of participants. It is possible to focus programs on long-term results under the current performance standards, but I expect that the performance standards themselves will change to reflect this new emphasis. In the meantime, as usual, the job before you isn't easy.

Let me describe briefly one model, suggest some principles for action and then list a few resource people who can offer assistance as you develop summer remediation programs.

Perhaps the most significant model for summer remediation is the Summer Training and Education Program (STEP), a series of experimental programs operated by Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) which is based in Philadelphia. Since the summer of 1984, about 1600 young people have participated either in a treatment or a control group in five sites: Boston; Portland, Oregon; San Diego; Seattle; and Fresno. The program serves 14 to 15 year olds for a period of two summers and the school year in between. It has two goals:

- o to help youngsters stay in school and receive their high school diploma;
- o and, to reduce teen parenthood.

Shorter term goals include reducing the summer academic loss, analyzing the feasibility of programs like this and increasing young people's knowledge of birth control. There are four components of the program:

- o work experience during the summer months;
- o life skills activities;
- o academic remediation;
- o a voluntary support component during the school year.

According to the P/PV analysts, the remediation component is by far the most difficult.

Results of these tests so far include a conclusion that the program is feasible. However, my own visits to some of the sites and discussions with P/PV staff make me emphasize the fact that these programs are feasible but they are difficult to put together. You all know how difficult it is simply to run an efficient, well supervised summer jobs program. Adding a remediation program obviously compounds the difficulty.

The STEP program has also discovered that they are able to reduce summer loss in reading and math. Some groups do better than others. From my reading, it seems that Hispanic young people are particularly responsive to these programs.

In terms of the social goal of reducing teen parenthood, P/PV has very heartening results. They have evidence, both from youngsters' own reports and observations from counselors, that the boys who participate in this program may be abstaining from sexual activities compared to their peers. However, there are no apparent differences in girls' behavior so far.

Let me give you a few principles for action based on my analysis of the amendments, research and program model experience.

- o Build on what you've got. If your service delivery area has begun even the slightest effort to provide remedial education during the summer months, build on that effort.
- o Start small. Some of the pilot sites for the STEP program had as few as 20 to 25 youngsters the first year. There is nothing in the legislation that requires that every young person participate.
- o In working with other agencies, take a problem-solving approach. Let me give you some examples. Many States have adopted new educational standards in response to the recent emphasis on excellence in education. By strengthening academic requirements, they often find that they are pushing poor achievers toward dropping out. It may be effective to approach one school system or even one school with a suggestion that together you could design a solution

to the problem of potential increases in the number of dropouts. For example, if a youngster tests as much as two grades below standard, the school and the job training program might try to provide remedial assistance along with a summer job. Some programs coordinate with the schools very simply. They schedule summer jobs after summer school. Other schools are prohibited from enrolling young people in summer school unless the young person has actually failed. They may welcome assistance in setting up alternative remedial programs for students who are performing below grade level, but who have not yet failed a course.

Another approach might be to focus on specific problem groups, such as teen parents, drug or alcohol abusers, or young offenders, and to condition their receipt of a summer job on participation in remedial education.

You may be able to use school referrals to avoid confidentiality problems related to individual test scores. Ask the school to refer only students who are reading two grades below standard. Perhaps the school could test those youngsters -- and a comparison group -- in the fall to evaluate the program's effectiveness.

- o Look for ways to turn the program into a year-round endeavor. The work of coordinating with the schools, the cost of curriculum materials, the effort to recruit good teachers -- is simply too much of an investment to restrict yourself to the summer. Quite a few service delivery areas have set up small learning centers that can accommodate 10 to 25 individuals at a time. They have purchased individualized, self-paced instruction materials and use the center for all sorts of different groups.

- o If not this year, then soon, you need to move toward individualized, self-paced instruction. This capability is absolutely essential to working with adults, to working with dropouts, and it has proven quite effective with young people who are having learning difficulties. When I visited the Boston STEP demonstration, one of the instructors told me that he resisted the technique at first. However, he said, the kids began to complain that the individualized self-paced materials forced them to concentrate and actually work throughout the class period. Those complaints sold him, and they impressed me, as well.

- o Actively seek help. It is difficult to set up a summer remediation component but help is available. Public/Private Ventures has operated experimental sites. The Department of Labor should have significant assistance available. The Job Training Partnership, Inc., put together a list of helpful hints from service delivery areas they surveyed that had already established summer remediation programs. You should certainly contact the public interest group that represents your jurisdiction, the National Alliance of Business and other groups that might offer some assistance.

- o Expect change. There is no way that you can design a summer remediation program today that will operate unchanged for the next several years. All sorts of issues arise and experienced service delivery areas have often found that opposite solutions work best in their own areas.

Finally, here is a start for your own list of resource people:

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